



Terminating Trash in the Anacostia Watershed

A NOAA proposal to the Marine Debris Program

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Principle Investigators

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Focus Area

This proposal focuses on trash monitoring, reduction, and education efforts in a targeted subwatershed of the Potomac Watershed in metropolitan Washington, DC.

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Office Responsible for Project Implementation

Office of Response and Restoration

Names of NOAA and Non-NOAA Partners

Tracy Bowen, Alice Ferguson Foundation

New Project

Yes, however this project builds from efforts previously funded by Marine Debris.

Total Funds Requested

\$75K

Abstract

Building from and leveraging existing partner and NOAA efforts and support, *Terminating Trash* will implement specific outreach elements from the Anacostia Watershed Trash Reduction Strategy (June 2006) and the 2006 Trash-Free Potomac Watershed Initiative. This is a unique opportunity to help fund previously identified, on-the-ground actions to help reduce trash entering the Anacostia River, and subsequently the Potomac. We propose to develop and implement a targeted outreach effort that will incorporate audience analysis and mid-program and final evaluations to determine efficacy of outreach activities.

The outreach efforts will target select portions of the Anacostia Watershed and use traditional and non-traditional media, audience analysis techniques, and follow-up evaluation to determine the most effective message formats, content, and delivery mechanisms for audiences.

Statement of Need

For roughly two decades, local groups have conducted trash cleanups in the Potomac and Anacostia watersheds. Volunteers have scoured the shorelines, waded through wetlands, and bobbed on boats to remove thousands of tons of plastic bottles, plastic and steel drums and barrels, refrigerators, stoves and other discarded appliances, plastic bags, tires, and auto batteries from our local waters. These volunteers have found everything—including kitchen sinks, motorcycles, and a '57 Chevy—in the rivers that some view as open garbage dumps. During last year's Potomac Watershed cleanup, spearheaded by the Alice Ferguson Foundation, volunteers removed 217 tons of trash in one day.

A tributary of the Potomac Watershed, the Anacostia River subwatershed encompasses 176-square miles within the District of Columbia and Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland. It is one of the most densely populated and ethnically diverse watersheds within the Chesapeake Bay drainage basin. The Anacostia's 800,000-plus residents represent nearly six percent of the Chesapeake's total human population. The nonprofit organization American Rivers identified the Anacostia as one of the ten most polluted urban rivers in the country and it has been cited nationally as exemplifying urban watershed problems. The Chesapeake Bay Program has identified the Anacostia as one of three watersheds of concern.

An estimated 20,000 tons of trash enter the Anacostia River every year (Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources). From 1998-2004, the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) collected roughly 600 tons of trash and over 7500 tires. During the 2004 Earth Day clean-up event, 1100 AWS volunteers collected 43 tons of trash and over 200 tires. Marine debris in the Anacostia has chemical, physical, and social impacts—interfering with the establishment of aquatic plants, leaching toxics that impact flora and fauna, creating hazards to wildlife through ingestion or entanglement, and resulting in less river-related recreation by residents.

On March 16, 2006, eighteen elected officials and over 200 individuals from various agencies and organizations committed to specific actions to achieve a Trash-Free Potomac Watershed by 2013. With past funding from NOAA's Marine Debris Program, a coalition of local, state, and federal agencies and organizations will release this June 2006 the *Anacostia River Watershed Trash Reduction Strategy*, which describes specific actions to reduce trash in this tributary of the Potomac. The *Anacostia Strategy* is the first Potomac subwatershed to produce such a report—and it is the goal of the Potomac Trash-Free Treaty to have every subwatershed develop this type of strategy to achieve a trash-free watershed by 2013. Through this proposal, NOAA and partners hope to build on existing energy and support and begin implementing specific sections of the Potomac treaty and Anacostia trash strategy relating to outreach.

Scope of Work

With funding from Marine Debris, NOAA and partners propose to implement a comprehensive outreach and evaluation project for a specific subwatershed of the Potomac Watershed. This proposal addresses one component in the grant guidelines: education/outreach. Partners (NOAA and AFF) will address this category by developing and implementing an outreach/education campaign that incorporates pre-testing messages and evaluation.

Outreach & Education Program

Working with the Potomac Trash Free Summit Public Awareness, Education, and Action Committee (through the Alice Ferguson Foundation), partners will develop and implement an outreach and education (O&E) program that identifies and targets key audiences residing in the Anacostia subwatershed. Message content, format and delivery will be researched and pre-tested among target audiences to help ensure efficacy and audience attitudes and values are incorporated into messages. There are many ways to target audiences—through attitudes, demographics, and language, for example. Through the Summit Public Awareness Committee, partners will work with advertising, media and communication experts (from academia, interest groups, and industry) who will advise how best to target audiences, develop and test messages, and evaluate program effectiveness within this specific geographic area.

The O&E program will be implemented through both traditional (public service announcements, signs on buses and metros, etc.) and non-traditional (local blogs, youth instant messaging, email listservs). One action partners will pursue is working with local reporters to develop a series of articles on trash in local newspapers. Media research indicates most citizens get their information and retain it best from reading their local newspaper.

Partners will also focus O&E Program efforts around a Citizens' Declaration of Action Pledge that will be made available through multiple and diverse media (local news, websites, listserves, blogs, schools, promotional packets, etc.). The pledge is a critical piece of the O&E program because it asks for a specific behavior—stop littering. Communication and media campaigns and programs that are successful specify the exact behavior or behaviors needed to resolve a problem. Other factors that help determine success is whether messages invoke self-interest and personal connection to the issue. Because trash is such a visible, tangible pollutant, partners plan to craft and pretest messages that resonate with audience attitudes and values. Pre-testing will be accomplished through a series of focus groups.

Outcomes and Benefits to Society

This project has the potential to provide benefits at the local, regional, national and international levels. First, at the local level, partners will focus efforts on a specific geographic area—portions of the Anacostia Watershed—and target outreach efforts around trash hotspots identified through previous surveys. Partners will use demographic data and information collected from personal observations to work with media and outreach specialists who will help develop and pre-test audience-appropriate messages, formats, and vehicles. For example, if a trash hotspot is identified near a school, partners will work with the school, students, and the surrounding neighborhood to develop, pre-test, and implement age-appropriate messages and formats that resonate with students and nearby residents. The anticipated outcomes from this local effort are a cleaner subwatershed and more informed citizens.

In terms of regional benefits, this will be the first outreach initiative implemented after the Potomac Trash-Free Summit. Based on the evaluation of this outreach effort, NOAA and AFF hope to learn from and adapt future outreach efforts in this subwatershed and other subwatersheds. In addition, because this O&E Program is part of

a regional alliance and collaboration jump-started by the 2006 Potomac Trash-Free Summit, partners will be able ensure message consistency across the region.

Finally, because the target area is the Anacostia Watershed in the nation's capitol area, partners anticipate this effort to have national and international benefits. There are few cities in our country that are visited by so many than Washington, DC. Creating and implementing a successful trash education and monitoring program will provide other urban areas with a working model—this project thus can be brought to what will hopefully be a national scale.

To summarize, this proposal hopes to engage targeted audiences to heighten awareness, change behavior, evaluates outreach effectiveness, and ultimately reduce trash in a diverse microcosm of the Washington, DC, region. If successful, partners will communicate effectiveness of the project through conferences, websites, academic journals, and mainstream media, so that our efforts can be duplicated nationally and even internationally in other urban subwatersheds.

Project Timeline and Milestones

Month 1

- Partners identify advertising, communication and media experts
- Partners work with experts to develop and pretest specific messages, formats, and delivery mechanisms targeting hotspot locations and specific audiences. Focus groups will be used to pretest messages among audiences.
- Partners refine messages, formats, and mechanisms based on pretesting.

Months 2-11

- Partners implement O&E program in previously identified trash hotspot areas.
- Partners adapt O&E program as needed based on mid-program evaluation. Again, focus groups to be used for mid-program evaluation.

Month 12

- Partners conduct final evaluation of O&E Program effectiveness using focus groups.
- Partners write up results in paper to be published or presented at appropriate conferences and meetings relating to trash.

Geographic Region(s) where this project will occur:

Please specify:

Anacostia Subwatershed of the Potomac Watershed

DETAILED BUDGET			
Expenditure Type	Activity	Organization Transferring Funds	Amount
3 Focus Groups	Work with advertising expert to conduct focus groups	AFF	\$15K (range anywhere from \$5K to \$10K per focus group)

Print & other materials	Develop info materials (print, PSAs, blogs, metro & bus signs) based on focus group data	AFF	\$35K est.
O&E Program	Mid-program and final program evaluation	AFF	\$15k
O&E Program and Survey Oversight	Hold initial weekly meetings, convene workshop if needed, develop strategy, regularly convene partners, update and post info on NOAA website, email listserves	NOAA	\$10K
TOTAL			\$75K

List of Other Funding Sources (if applicable)

Name of Funding Source	Activity	Amount of Funding
AFF is currently seeking other agencies to contribute to a regional outreach fund to help develop and implement O&E activities in each subwatershed		NOAA debris funds would be the first

PRODUCTS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES					
Activities	Short-Term Outputs	Long Term Outcomes	Performance Measures	Baseline Value (FY 06)	Target (FY 07)
(Example) Creation of lesson plan focused on marine debris	Increased number of classrooms exposed to lesson plans	Implementation of lesson plan into county school curriculums	Number of schools using curriculum	0	5
Create audience-specific messages & identify appropriate delivery mechanisms	Increased awareness among target audiences identified in focus groups	Audience awareness and behavior change	Less trash in subwatershed hotspots	One subwatershed	Eventually expand O&E program to all Potomac subwatersheds

References

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